CHAPTER - IX

LITERARY ACTIVITIES

The *Rājatarangini* of Kalhana shows highly developed literary system of the eighth century and onwards, which must have been the product of a long period of literary activities. Kalhana distinctly tells that he had inspected “eleven works of former scholars containing the chronicles of the Kings.” Kashmiris are proud of the literary glory of their land. Kashmir has since very early period been called “Śāradā deśa” or the land of Goddess Sarasvatī. Kashmir is known as the valley of great teachers and savants. For centuries it was the home of the great Sanskrit scholars and luminaries, who were not only revered in the valley but accepted as authorities outside as well. One great Indian religion, Śaivism, has found some of its most eloquent teachers on the bank of the Vitasta. Kalhana has given a wide picture of literary activities through the great works who flourished long before and who thought and wrote with ability on different branches of literature.

SUVRATA

Suvrata wrote the oldest extension works containing the royal chronicles of Kashmir. It is believed that Suvrata’s compilation the study of the oldest chronicle was discontinued and that complete copy of his works was no longer to be found in Kalhana’s time. Kalhana attributed their partial loss to the composition of Suvrata, who had condensed their contents in a kind of hand book. Kalhana refers to the popularity of Suvrata’s poem, but call it troublesome reading owing to the author’s misplaced learning. The *kavya* character of this composition can hence safely be concluded.

KṢEMENDRA

Kṣemendra’s ‘List of Kings’ was evidently a work of some popularity and pretension, for Kalhana singles it out for special mention immediately after
Suvrata’s handbook. He acknowledged it to be “the work of a poet”, but charged it with showing mistakes in every single part.\textsuperscript{5}

Kṣemendra, the Kashmiri poet moralist, historian and critic, flourished in the last quarter of tenth and first half of the eleventh century. In the colophon to the ‘Samayamāṭṛkā’, Kṣemendra has written that he finished that work during the reign of Ananta in the 25th year of the Laukika era. Again in "Suvaṛṭṭa - Tilakam" he reiterates that he wrote in the reign of king Ananta and finally in ‘Daśāvatāra-caritam’ he says that he finished this assignment in the reign of Kalaśa, son of Ananta, the year being 41 Saptarṣi era. So it is abundantly clear that he did at least see the rule of two kings- Ananta and his son Kalaśa. Again in his ‘Bharatamañjari’ he has alluded to his being the pupil of Abhinavagupta from whom he learnt Alarikāra Śastras. The date of this Śaiva philosopher and commentator - Abhinavagupta cannot be later than 1014 CE because he wrote his bigger commentary on the Pratyabhijña Darśana in 1014 CE. At that time Kṣemendra studied at his feet. So we can safely assume that Kṣemendra must have been born at least 20 or 25 years before this date so as to develop his comprehension in receiving the tuition from Abhinavagupta. Hence his date of birth can roughly be placed in the last quarter (towards its end) of the 10th century. His explicit mention of Ananta and his son Kalaśa only might give some clue as to his death or retirement from creative literature. He does not mention any other king after Kalaśa which proves that he was not destined to see the reign of the successor to Kalaśa. The year in which he finished the ”Daśāvatāra-caritam” has been given as 41 Saptarṣi era which corresponds to 1066 CE. After this date he either sought respite from literary pursuits or was cut short in life by death. He went to Tripuresa Mountain for spending his old age there and probably breathed his last at the Āśhrama he had built over there. King Kalaśa reigned from CE 1073 - 1089 and it can fairly be assumed that Kṣemendra cast off his corporal frame after CE 1066 and not in any case later than CE 1089. Between these two limits his date of death can be cogently placed. This Tripureśa or Tripureśvara was held in great reverence in
olden days as Kalhana alludes repeatedly to it for its sanctity. King Avantivarman also passed his last days on this Tirtha. The Nilañata Purāṇa also mentions it as a place of pilgrimage. This has been identified as ‘Triphar’ on route to Mahādeva shrine, some 4 miles from the headworks of the present Harwan to the North-East. A stream known as Tripuraganga is still visited by the pilgrims going to Mahādeva which flows close to modern Triphar. Even though it has lost its fame now, yet Śrīvara has mentioned about an ‘Annasattrā’ started by king Zain-ul-Ab-Din (Bud Shah) at this Tirtha. This may be the permanent ‘Langar’ of those days started for feeding the needy and might prove that during the Muslim rule also it had retained its renown as a holy place.

Kṣemendra unlike other Sanskrit poets does not feel shy of publicity. In the colophons of his various works he acquaints us fully with his lineage; piecing together all these facts given by the author himself, we can conveniently build his family tree. His grandfather’s name was Sindhu being the son of Narendra a minister of Jayāpīḍa, grandson of Lalitāditya. He was a very strong and benevolent king of Kashmir and was named Vinayāditya also especially on his coins. His father’s name was Prakāśendrā.

His versatile genius has flowered in many directions. Keith called him a polymath while Stein has appended the epithet polymister with his name. This tribute goes a long way in establishing that he did not confine himself to a single form of literary expression but tried his pen over many other forms with equal force and effect. However, it is to be conceived rightly that though Kṣemendra’s father was a devout Śaiva and he himself received tuition from Abhinavagupta - a Śavite stalwart - yet he got converted to Vaiśnavism by the efforts of Somapāda. It also seems that he had more respect for this Somabhāgvata than even for Abhinavagupta. Moreover, he kept his mind open and studied Buddhism also. Perhaps his awake intuition first of all thought of including the Buddha among the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu. Some faint echoes of ridiculing Śaivism can also be gleaned from his compositions especially in
'Desopadeśa' and 'Naramamālā'. But despite all his flirtations with Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Buddhism, he was a firm believer in the religion of Śrūtis (Vedas) and Śmṛtis.

Broadly speaking Kṣemendra’s immense literary activities can be divided into four distinct traits:

a) As a condenser of very lengthy epic-literature and other religious Kāvyas.
b) As a historian.
c) As a satirist.
d) As a writer on rhetoric, poetics and metres.

Under the first head, his summaries of the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata, and the Brhadkathā of Guṇādhya, the Daśavatārcarita and Buddhavadanakalpalata are note-worthy. By epitomizing the Brhadkathā written originally in paiśācī, he did a great service to the literary tradition of Sanskrit literature. The original having been lost, but Kṣemendra’s translation into Sanskrit has served admirably to retrieve that irreparable damage, and so he is looked upon as the originator rather than the translator of this famous story-literature. Somadeva Bhaṭṭa also prepared a second version of the Brhadkathā in Sanskrit after him which proves that this kind of literature on the pattern of Arabian Nights had become very popular with the people. The Brhadkathā Mañjarī deals with amors and heroism of various kings especially the king Udyana. It has nineteen Lamabakas (cantos). The poetry employed is not of high order and in the words of Bühler may be called “verified prose”. The Rāmāyaṇa Mañjarī and the Mahābhārata Manjari are obviously the shorter versions of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata - the epic literature of India respectively.

Buddhavadanakalpalata, is a collection of the Jātaka tales. On the authority of the poet’s son Somendra Kṣemendra composed only 107 Pallavas (chapters), to which his worthy son added one more, making it the auspicious
number of 108. Unfortunately the first 40 Chapters of this compendium were lost.

The *Dasāvatārcarita* as the name suggests contains anecdotes regarding various incarnations of Viṣṇu; though Kṣemendra does display a rare kind of ingenuity in dealing with this religious topic, yet it cannot be termed to be his original work; first 9 cantos are definitely derived from the Purāṇas. Novelty of conception is discerned in the 7th canto wherein "whole of the Ramayana is narrated with Rāvana as the central figure". The result is quite happy and vividness of description adds to its charm. This novelty of conception is further more witnessed in his extolling the Buddha as an incarnation of Viṣṇu.

As a historian no estimate of his can be built as his *Nṛpāvāli* (the list of kings) has been lost even though Kalhana did consult it for writing, his *Rājataraṅgini*. It is to be conceded that Kalhana while enumerating the sources of the historical data on which he built his chronicle, does mention his list of kings which must have commanded some respect in his time, and to justify the writing of his Tarangini pointed to the defects in the former Nṛpāvalī.

The *Samayamāṭrikā* may also be called the finest composition from the versatile pen of Kṣemendra. Herein the poet lays bare the seductive amors of prostitutes and their enticing acumen. Some critics have found Kṣemendra guilty of low-taste, vulgarity and only narrating the bad points in the society. However, it is to be remembered in this context that Kṣemendra in the first instance does not claim to be a religious preacher. He writes what he actually sees and feels. If the society was rampant with vulgarity, low taste and other evils, how could the poet be blind to these? The degradation in the society could not have remained hidden even if Kṣemendra had tried to make the use of idealistic rather than the realistic approach to life. The filth and the mud in the society would after all raise its head had Kṣemendra covered it with the sweet smelling roses of his imagination even.
The Cārucaryā is actually a century of verses in Anuṣṭubha metre. According to the author the main purpose of writing it is to teach law and polity by way of a moral couched in the first line of the verse and followed by an illustration in the second. The illustrations are mainly drawn from epics and Purāṇas. The Desopdeśa contains updeśas (advice) in eight cantos regarding his innate feelings about the customs and notorious characters in the society. In the opening verses of this book the author craves for the indulgence of the readers in not construing any other meaning into his use of biting sarcasm, but only to bear with him, because he would like to reform the society through this medium.

Under the fourth head, Kṣemendra as a rhetorician and writer on poetics and metrics composed the Kavi Kanṭhābharaṇa (The necklace of a poet) and the Aucitya Vicāracarca (an account of propriety) and the Suvṛatta tilakam (the crest of good metres) deserves special mention. As the titles of these compositions reveal, the first is a short treatise on the making of a poet for which divine as well as human effort is necessary. The second declares the "propriety" as the soul of poetry. The age-long predominance of Rasa (sentiments) has been subordinated by him to Aucitya (propriety). The third obviously is a work on metres. Twenty four metres are described, discussed and illustrated by him in all.

THE NĪLAMATA PURĀṆA

Kalhaṇa says that while writing the Rājatarangini, he received considerable information regarding the earlier periods from a work entitled the Nīlmatā Purāṇa. The date of the Nīlmatā Purāṇa is uncertain. But Kalhaṇa's reference to it as a work of high antiquity may suggest a date earlier than the accession of the Kārkotās. The mention of the Buddha in the work as an incarnation of Viṣṇu has led some scholars to assign the book not much earlier than the 7th century CE.
The *Nilmata Purāṇa* is a great source of information of the ancient history of Kashmir. It describes at great length how Kashmir was created out of water and left to the care of the Nāgas of whom Nīla was the chief. According to this work, Kashmir, was Satī transformed into land. At Vasuki’s request, Viṣṇu agreed to apportion the great lake of the land of Satī as a dwelling place for the Nāgas, where they would be safe from Garuḍa. Viṣṇu further ordered Garuḍa to make Nīla, the chief of all Nāgas.

At that time, a water demon named Jalodbhava was causing great trouble by killing the inhabitants of Darvābhisāra, Gaṅḍhāra, Jālandhara and other neighbouring regions. Nīla went to his father Kasyapa and asked him to devise means by which the wicked demon could be got rid of. At the request of Kaśyapa, the gods came down to Kashmir to fight the water demon and Viṣṇu ultimately slew him.

Next the *Nilmata Purāṇa* relates how Kashmir came to be inhabited by human being. After the valley was recovered, people could at first live for only six months and during the rest of the year, the country was occupied by the Piśācas under their king Nikumbha. Nikumbha left the valley with the whole of his army at the beginning of spring to fight the goblins of the ocean of sands. Then the men came to Kashmir, lived during the summer and after gathering their harvest left the valley before the advent of the winter when the Piśāca king returned and when no human being could live in the valley due to excessive cold. This continued for four yugas. Then a brāhmaṇa, Candradeva by name, did not leave the valley during the winter and spent the season in the sub-terranean palace of Nīla, the king of the Nāgas. Candradeva prayed before Nīla that in future people should be allowed to live in Kashmir during the winter also. to which the Naga king agreed. Henceforth, there was no more any excessive snowfall or trouble from the Piśācas and slowly men came to live in valley throughout the year. The *Nilmata Purāṇa* is considered as a handbook of rites and ceremonies of the people of ancient Kashmir. But beside that, it is also
a real mine of information regarding the sacred places and their legends and that it shows how Kalhaṇa used this source of the history of Kashmir.

HEŁARĀJA

He was a Pāśupata ascetic. He was a Kashmiri and lived probably in the 9th and 10th century. He has composed a commentary on the Vākyapādiya, known as the Pārthivāvalī. Kalhaṇa says the composition was of considerable extent of twelve thousand ślokas. But the terms in which he mentions Helarāja’s chronicle, seem to indicate that he has no direct access to it.

CANDRAGOMIN

Candragomin, the founder of the Candra School of Sanskrit grammar, probably lived in Kashmir. According to Kalhaṇa’s evidence, Candrācārya revived the study of the Mahābhāṣya and composed his own grammar during the reign of king Abhimanyu.

Kalhaṇa’s testimony does not give any clue regarding the date of Candragomin. But it is clear from his statement that the grammarian flourished long before the advent of the Kārkotās. His Buddhist title ‘gomin’ and the Mangalaśloka of his vṛtti in which he pays reverence to Sarvajña; tend to prove that Candragomin was a follower of the Buddha. This literature recasts the work of Pāṇini and reduces the master’s eight chapters into six of four sections each. He often rearranges and simplifies Pāṇini. But excepting thirty-five new sūtras, there is nothing much original in his work.

VASUNANDA

He was the ruler of Gonandiya dynasty of the valley and a son of Kṣitinanda, whom the goddess has spared as the root-bulb of the family tree. Kalhaṇa gives this information that Vasunanda had composed a well-known work on erotic known as Smaraśāstra. However no work of Vasunada is extant.
CANDAKA

Kalhana in his Rājatarāṅgini named another poet Candaka, who is said to have been a great poet. His identification is unknown to us. Kalhana has not even attributed any specific work to him. Some scholars identify him with the same Candaka to whom some verses are ascribed in Ballabhadeva’s Subhaṣitāvali. He is also identified with the writer Candra, who is mentioned by the Chinese traveller I-tsing.

MĀṬRGUPTA

Kalhana in the Rājatarāṅgini describes the name of a ruler Māṭrgupta, the patron of Bharṭṛmeṣṭha, who ruled Kashmir for a while. He was a poet and a contemporary of Pravarasena II (c. CE 580) of Kashmir and Vikarmādiya of Ujjayini (c. 6th century CE). He has given his commentary on Bharata’s Nāṭyaśāstra which is referred to in Sundarasinha’s Nāṭya-pradīpa. Kṣemendra quotes Māṭrgupta in one of his works and some of his verses have found a place in Vallabhadeva’s anthology. Some scholars have endeavored to prove his identity with the great Kālidāsa. The arguments put forward by them may be summed up in the following points:-

(1) ‘Maṭr’ is same as ‘Kāli’ and ‘Gupta’ is same as ‘Dāsa’.

(2) Tradition says that Vikramādiya bestowed half of his kingdom on Kālidāsa. This agrees very well with the fact narrated by Kalhana that king Vikramādiya of Ujjain made a gift of Kashmir to Māṭrgupta.

(3) The Rājatarāṅgini of Kalhana speaks of a large number of poets, some of whom like Vākpatirāja and Bhavabhūti lived beyond the borders of Kashmir, but it never makes any reference to Kālidāsa, who was undoubtedly the most famous of all.

(4) Like Kālidāsa, who made a faithful portrayal of his sorrowful feelings of separation from his beloved in the Meghādutam Māṭrgupta is also

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known to have lived away from his wife and home.

(5) According to tradition, Kālidāsa wrote a poem called *Setukāvya* in Prākṛta at the request of Pravarasena. Tradition also says that Pravarasena II of Kashmir constructed a bridge of boats across the Vitastā. It is possible that Mātrgupta wrote the poem at the request of the Kashmirian king Pravarasena II who occupied the throne of Kashmir, when Mātrgupta retired to Banaras.

(6) By astronomical calculations, some writers have tried to prove that Kālidāsa lived in the middle of the 6th century CE. This is in conformity with the date or Mātrgupta, who being a contemporary of Vikarmādiyā, Harṣa of Mālava and Pravarasena II of Kashmir, must be assigned to the end of the 6th century.

(7) Kālidāsa’s affectionate description of the rice fields and the songs associated with the rice fields. His description of a living saffron plant which is grown in Kashmir and which no non-Kashmirian writer is known to have described.

(8) Kālidāsa’s description of Kashmir in the *Śakuntalā* in which he refers to the lacustrine origin of Kashmir, which is commonly known to Kashmiris.

(9) His reference to certain Kashmiri legends such as that of Nikumbha which are known only to Kashmiri writers.

(10) Kālidāsa’s personal religion which was the Kashmir Śaivism based on the doctrine of the Pratyabhijñā philosophy unknown outside Kashmir then. Though this philosophy was developed in its refined form towards the end of the eighth century A. D., there is no doubt that this tendency of thought existed long before its systematization by Somānanda.
But the arguments in favor of the identification of Mātrgupta with Kālidāsa are not convincing. These are chiefly based on the synonymy of the two names, Kālidāsa and Mātrgupta, in the absence of any mention of Kālidāsa in the Rājatarangini and on the attribution to Kālidāsa of the Prākṛta poem Setubandha composed at the request of a king Pravarasena, who was assumed to have been Pravarasena II. Mātrgupta’s successor. Professor Max Muller has reproduced these arguments in his *India*, but has in the same place indicated the grave objections which preclude the acceptance of this identification. In none of the works of Kālidāsa there is any mention of Mātrgupta. Secondly, Kalhana refers only to such poets as had some connection with the affairs of Kashmir Bhavabhūti and Vākpati are mentioned, as they were court poets of an antagonist of a Kashmirian king. On the other hand, such great poets as Vālmīki and Vedavyāsa have not been mentioned in the Rājatarangini. Probably, Kālidāsa had nothing to do with the kings of Kashmir and this may be the reason of Kalhana’s silence over him. The subject matter of Meghadūta does not invariably indicate that its author lived in separation from his wife. The mere similarity in the subject matter of two verses also cannot indicate the identity of their authors.

Kālidāsa might have written a poem entitled Setubandhakāvya at the request of Pravarsena, but this Pravarasena might be the Vakātaka king of that name and that would make Kālidāsa a contemporary of Vikramāditya Candragupta II. Lastly, the method of reaching at a specified date of history by means of astronomical calculations has not been generally successful. Even if it be a fact that Kālidāsa flourished in the middle of the 6th century CE that is no sure reason for identifying him with Mātrgupta. The reasons in favour of the identification of Mātrgupta with Kālidāsa, however, are not convincing. It is inexplicable why the Rājatarangini should refer to Kālidāsa by the pseudonym Mātrgupta. Ānandavardhana and several other Kashmirian writers quote verses from Kālidāsa, but never identify him with Mātrgupta.
If, however, Mātrgupta cannot be indentified with Kālidāsa, there is a strong presumption in his being a Kashmiri by birth. He is said to have flourished during the latter half of the fifth or the first half of the sixth century CE. His reference to Hūnas in Kashmir in the Raghuvamśa and other references to the climate and products of the Valley, form the basis of Pandit Lachmi Dhar Sastri’s theory of Kashmir being the birth place of the famous poet-dramatist of Sanskrit literature. His exhaustive research on the subject may be summarised thus. Mātrgupta, however, appears to have been a historical character, who lived in Kashmir, if not at the end of the 6th century CE, at least in an earlier period. His commentary on Bharata’s Nāṭyaśāstra is referred to in Sundaramisra’s Nāṭyapradīpa Kṣemendra quotes the opinions of Mātrgupta in one of his work. Some of the verses have also found place in Vallabhadeva’s anthology.

MENŢHA

In the Rājatarangini, Kalhana tells that king Mātrgupta honoured the poet Menţha, for composing the poem Hayagrīvavadha, by presenting a golden dish to be placed below it, lest its flavour might escape? Honoured by such an appreciation Bhartṛmenţha thought richer rewards needless. The poem Hayagrīvavadha is lost but Bhartṛmenţha is mentioned by Kṣemendra in the Suvṛttatilaka and by Maṅkha in Śrikanṭhacarita. The date of Menţha is also not known for certain. But Menţha or Bhartṛmenţha seems to have been a person of fame. He receives the honour of being placed second in the spiritual lineage of Vālmiki. The Kashmirian writer Maṅkha places him with Subandhu, Bhāravi and Bāña.

BHAṬṬA UDBHAṬA

Kalhana gives this information in his chronicle that learned Bhaṭṭa Udbhāṭa was the sahapati or court pandit of king Jayāpīḍa, known chiefly for his writings on aesthetics, who received a daily allowance of one lakh
Dinaras. He wrote profusely on the Alāṅkāra School. He also wrote the poem Kumārasambhava, Which is not available now. Some verses of it are found in his Alāṅkārasangraha, which deals in detail with the definitions and explanations of forty-one Alāṅkāras. Ruddatta (9th century CE) reviews the whole field of poetics in the sixteen chapters of his extensive work Kāvyalāṅkāra.

DĀMODARAGUPTA

Unfortunately, our knowledge about the life and times of the author of the poem, Dāmodośagupta, is meagre in the extreme. Like most of the luminaries on the horizon of Sanskrit literature, Dāmodośagupta also maintains complete taciturnity about himself except only once when he gives his own name and speaks of himself as the author of the Kuṭṭānimāta. We would have remained completely blank as regards his time, locale and patron but for a single stanza in that exhaustive chronicle of Kashmir which informs us that Jayāpiḍa Vinayāditya, the Kārkoṭa-Nāga king of Kashmir, appointed the poet Dāmodośagupta, the author of the Kuṭṭānimāta, as his chief councillor (dhisaciva) even as the demon king Bali had appointed Kavi (i.e. Śukra). No other biographical detail is known about him from any other source. There is a divergence of opinion about the date of Jayāpiḍa, the patron of our poet. According to the system of chronology followed by Kalhana, Jayāpiḍa ruled for a period of thirty-one years, from 751 to 782 CE. S. P. Pandit holds this chronological scheme to be correct so far as the Kārkoṭa kings are concerned. There is a divergence of opinion about the date of Jayāpiḍa, the patron of our poet. According to the system of chronology followed by Kalhana, Jayāpiḍa ruled for a period of thirty-one years, from 751 to 782 CE, and S. P. Pandit holds this chronological scheme to be correct so far as the Kārkoṭa kings are concerned. But this chronology has not found favour with most of the modern historians who, basing on certain synchronisms furnished by the Chinese sources, hold that Kalhana has antedated the reigns of the Kārkoṭa kings by some years. The difference between the dates supplied by Kalhana and the actual dates arrived at on the basis of the Chinese evidence has been variously
estimated by scholars as twenty-five, thirty-one and thirty-eight years. Without entering into this controversy, it may be concluded that Jayāpīḍa ruled in the last quarter of the eighth and early in the ninth century CE. Our poet, who, according to Kalhana, was the chief minister of Jayāpīḍa, must also be taken to have flourished during the same period.

The above date, which is based on the contemporaneity of Jayāpīḍa and Dāmodaragupta, is also corroborated by a critical study of the valuable historical data afforded by the Kuttāṇīmata itself.

Dāmodaragupta was a poet of considerable merit. That in spite of the coarseness of its contents the work attained great popularity within a comparatively short time after its composition and was extensively quoted by rhetoricians, grammarians and compilers of anthologies is symbolic of the esteem which the posterity cherished for Dāmodaragupta and his work. Dāmodaragupta was not only an accomplished poet but also an erudite and well-read scholar who had an extensive knowledge of a wide variety of the literary lore popularly cultivated during his age as vouched for by innumerable specific, as well as casual, allusions to earlier and near contemporary author and texts found embedded throughout the poem.

ŚAṆKUKA

In the reign of the Kārkoṭa king Ajitāpīḍa, there lived a poet named, Śaṅkuka who is described by Kalhana "like a moon over the ocean of learned minds, composed a poem called Bhuvnabhuyudaya. The theme of the book was centred round the conflict between the regents Mamma and Utpalaka. The work has not come down but quotations from it are presented in Vallabhadeva’s Subhāṣītāvalī. Śaṅkuka’s verse has also been quoted in śārṅgadharpaddhati and the Śūktimuktāvalī, and there his father’s name has been given as Mayūra. Further, the name of Śaṅkuka has been referred to in the
fourth chapter of the Kāvyaprakāśa and his opinion on a point of poetics is considered authoritative.

ŚIVĀSVAMIN

Śivasvāmin also known as Bhaṭṭa Śivasvāmin who was an ardent follower of the Buddha is also mentioned by Kalhaṇa in his Chronicle.21 He wrote a poem named Kapphinabhyudaya, describing the expedition of Kapphina, king of Dakṣināpatha against Prasenajita of Śrāvastī. At the end of the war, which resulted in his victory, Kapphina accepted Buddhism and renounced his worldly attachments. Some of the verses of Śivasvāmin are quoted in Kṣemendra’s Kavikaṇṭhabharana and Vallabhadeva’s Subhāṣītāvalī. Otherwise, Muktakana is known only from quotations preserved in Kṣemendra’s Kavikaṇṭhabharana and Vallabhadeva’s Subhāṣītāvalī.

RATNAKARA

Kalhaṇa gives the name of another poet, Ratnakara in his Rājatarāṅgini.22 Ratnakara has been identified with the author of the great kāvya named Haravijaya, an enormous epic in fifty cantos which describes the defeat of demon Andhaka at the hands of Śiva. From the colophon of the work, it seems that Ratnakara whose full name is given as Rājānaka Ratnakara Vāgīśvara composed the poem during the reign of king Brhaspati Cippaṭa Jayāpiḍa, who, according to Kalhaṇa, died forty years before the accession of Avantivarman.23 It is possible that Ratnakara started his career under Cippaṭa Jayāpiḍa but was patronized also by Avantivarman. Besides the Haravijaya Kāvya, Ratnakara is credited with the composition of two smaller poems, Vakroktipaṭcasika and the Dhvanigāthā Paṇcika. Some of his verses have found place in Kṣemendra’s Śuvrattatilaka, in Vallabhadeva’s Subhāṣītāsilāvalī and in the Śāṅgadharapaddhati. The fame of Ratnakara seems to have spread outside and the poet Rājaśekhara praises him for his vast learning and wealth of imagery.
ANANDAVARDHANA

Kalhana in his chronicle tells that Anandavardhana obtained fame during the reign of Avantivarman. The fame of Anandavardhana rests principally on his treatise on the science of poetics. His great work the Dhvanyaloka, the Kavyaloka or Sahodayaloka is a commentary in four chapters on certain verses treating dhvani as the soul of poetry. Abhinavagupta’s elucidation on it, the Locana has given the work a wide reputation. Besides Dhvanyaloka, Anandavardhana composed several poems in Sanskrit and in Prakrta. His Deviśataka is a lyric written in praise of Pārvatī. The other poetical compositions are the Arjunacaritamahakāvyya (Sanskrit), the Viśamavanalīlā, the Harivijaya (both Prakrta) and the Matapariśā.

BHAṬṬA KALLĀṬA

According to Kalhana’s evidence, Bhaṭṭa Kallāṭa descended to the earth for the benefit of the people at the time of Avantivarman (CE 855/56-883). He was a pupil of Vasugupta, the founder of the Spandasastra branch of Kashmirian Śaiva philosophy. Bhaṭṭa Kallāṭa wrote a commentary called the Spandasarvasva (on his teacher’s Spandmrṛta). It is still extant. He was also the author of the Spandakārikās, an exposition on the work of Vasugupta. His two other books, the Tatvārtha-Cintāmaṇi and the Madhuvāhinī are now lost. Both of them were commentaries on the Śiva Sutras.

BHALLĀṬA

Kalhana tells that a poet named Bhallāṭa lived in the reign of Śaṅkaravarman. He is known for his excellent work Bhallāṭaśataka, a poem of 108 stanzas dealing with morality and conduct. Verses from this work have been quoted by Abhinavagupta, Kṣemendra and Mammaṭa.

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BILHANĀ

Another famous poet was Bilhana who rose to great prominence at the court of the Cālukya king Parmādi Vikramāditya Tribhuvanamalla, who ruled from 1076-1127 CE Kalhana was fully aware of it, which is clear from his statement as to the honour paid to Bilhana at Parmādi’s court.27 He appointed him as the "Chief Pandit (Vidyāpati) and when traveling on elephants through the hill-country of Karnāta, his parasol was borne aloft before the king." He has immortalised his patron in his Vikramāṅkadevacarita which is perhaps one of the first Sanskrit poems having an historical approach. Kalhana also mentioned in his chronicle that Bilhana left Kashmir during the reign of Kalaśa is of importance for the poet’s biography. It is important to mention that by this time Kalaśa was only nominal ruler. It is not the time of his actual rule after the death of his father Ananta.

From the last canto of his famous kāvyā we learn that his birthplace was Khonamusa (modern Khonmuh), a village six miles to the south-east of Srinagar. His father Jyeṣṭhakalaśa and his mother Nāgadevī took particular care of his education and he acquired proficiency in grammar and poetics; at the time of the nominal rule of Kalaśa, he set out for the plains of India to seek fame and fortune. He visited Mathura, Kāṇyakubja, Prayaga and Banaras. He stayed for some time at the court of Kṛṣṇa of Dāhala and later attracted by the fame of the courts of Dhāra and Anhilwad, he left for the latter place where he seems to have stayed for a brief period. From there he went to the sacred shrine of Rāmeśvara and on his way back, reached the court of Kalyan, where his talents were recognised by the king who installed him to the high position of Vidyāpati.

The Vikramāṅkadevacarita, glorifying king Vikramāditya Tribhuvanamalla of Kalyan (1076-1127 CE), is a poem of eighteen cantos opening with an eulogistic account of the Cālukya dynasty and depicting with usual
amplifications the conquests of Vikramāditya before his accession to the throne, his dethronement of his elder brother Someśvara II, his defeat and capture of his younger brother and his numerous wars with the faithless Colas. Though it has a historical theme, it is in all essentials only a kāvyā and not a history.

His Karṇasundarī, though written as a romantic tale, actually delineates in a complimentary fashion the marriage of the Cālukya Karṇadeva of Anhilwad. Another poem, generally ascribed to Bilhaṇa is Caurasurata-Pañcaśikā, of fifty amatory verses, on the topic of secret love. A masterpiece of emotional richness, it shows the author in his best as a writer of lyrical melody.

MAṆKHA

Kalhana has mentioned him as the renowned poet who served under Jayasimha. He is known for his poem Śrikanṭhacarita, written between 1135 and 1145 CE. The subject of the work is the Purāṇic legend of Śiva’s overthrow of Tripura. But besides the story of Tripura’s defeat, several cantos are employed in describing the usual accessories allowed in kāvyas, the seasons, the sunsets, the sunrises, court scenes, amusements etc. In the third canto, we also learn about the family and personal life of the poet. From which we learn that his grandfather’s name was Manmatha and his father was Viśvarāta. He had three other brothers, Śrigara, Bhaṅga and Alamkāra, all employed as state officials. Who are also mentioned by Kalhaṇa. Maṅkha himself held high office under Jayasirhha but it is unknown what his designation was. The twenty-fifth or last canto of the Śrikanṭhacarita is particularly interesting as it gives the names of thirty contemporary scholars, poets and officials who assembled at the house of Alamkāra on the occasion of the completion and public reading of the poem. One of the scholars was Kalyāṇa (Kalhaṇa) the celebrated author of the Rājatarangini. The list of poets and scholars given by Maṅkha shows that Kashmir of the twelfth century continued to be a centre of Sanskrit learning. A notable historical data revealed by Maṅkha’s enumeration
of the people in this literary gathering is the presence of two ambassadors, Suhala, sent by Govindacandra, the Rathora of Kanauj (who according to his inscriptions reigned between 1120 and 1144 CE), and Tejakanta sent by Aparāditya, the lord of the Koṅkans, whose inscriptions are dated 1185 and 1186 CE. Though as a pupil of the famous rhetorician Ruuyaka, Māṅkha shows some cleverness in rhetorical ornaments, it must be admitted that his work lacks lucidity of expression, freshness and variety. A dictionary called Māṅkhakośa is current in Kashmir. It is not known whether the writer of the Śrīkantṭhacarita is also the author of this lexicon.

VĀKPATIRĀJA

Kalhana has mentioned him as a famous poet who served Yaśovarman. When he was defeated by Lalitāditya, he came under Yaśovarman’s shelter. Vākpātirāja is known as the author of the Prākrit Kāvyā Gauḍavaho, which gives detail about Yaśovarman’s victory over a Gauḍa king.29

Along with these names Kalhana has given long list of those literary personalities whose identity is unknown to us like Manoratha, Śaṅkhadanta, Cāṭaka and Sarṇḍhimata. They are mentioned as great poets during the reign of Jayāpīḍa. Then Māṃmata, Vāmana, Udbhata were the famous poets under King Jayāpīḍa. Muktakana, Śivasvāmin, Ānandavardhana and Ratnākara were court poets of Avantivarman etc. Kalhana has not attributed any particular work to these poets but he has not forgotten to tell us that these people having achieved a high distinction in Sanskrit language and literature and made a mark in the rest of India where they were welcomed with honour. Thus we can say that Kashmir has produced a galaxy of poets and dramatists in Sanskrit. Influenced by the natural beauty of their homeland, its lofty mountains, lakes, waterfalls and charming flowers of multitudinous colours, they wrote dramas, epics, lyrical as well as dialectical poems, essays, fiction and anthologies. That’s why the learned pandits of Kashmir and their works were in demand at the courts of several enlightened princes in India, at important assemblies of
thinkers and writers and at the Sanskrit universities in the rest of India. It was the ambition of every student and lover of Sanskrit language and literature and Indian philosophy to go to Kashmir to drink deep at the fountain of knowledge and wisdom.
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